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[image]

Thank you all for taking the time to read this. Sure, it might not have a lot of comments or views compared to other books, but I'm proud of this.

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Step into the world of the Four Forest Clans.

They live long, heathly lives in the Four Forest Clans.

Cloudstar, the founder of CloudClan.
Baystar, the founder of BayClan.
Treestar, the founder of TreeClan.
Sagestar, the founder of SageClan.

Dawnstorm has lived life as a warrior in CloudClan.

Good prey, friendly cats, everything Dawncloud could've asked for in a Clan.

But then The Fire came.

It raged through their camp, and now the deputy is gone. Missing. Presumed dead.

But Dawnstorm knows it wasn't the fire that took the life of their beloved deputy.

It was a cat. A cat within CloudClan.

When more and more cats go missing, the Clan is devastated. But not Dawnstorm. She needs to find who is doing this.

When she, too, is one of the victims to this unwanted death wish, who will she find with claws against her throat, wanting to kill her?

Triggers:

LGBTQIA+ Representation
Gore
Blood
Death

Teaser

Dawnstorm's fur bristled as she growled.

"You can't do this!" She hissed in the flames.

The elder's den collapsed in on itself. A yowl of fright sounded from a little way away.

"You have betrayed your Clan!" Dawnstorm yelped, her paws hot as she padded around the fire.

She was trapped.

She was going to die.

And she wouldn't even figure out who was killing their own Clanmates.

Prologue

Dawnpaw growled, holding a stick in her jaws. On the end of the stick was a ball of moss, with mouse bile that smelled vile.

Dawnpaw wrinkled her nose and walked on, from the medicine den to the elder's den. Twigclaw lifted his head as Dawnpaw entered.

"Hello, Twigclaw. You too, Seedfoot." Dawnpaw greeted the elders politely.

"Eh, hello youngin'." Twigclaw rasped as Dawnpaw continued her way towards his backside, where she dipped her head down so the bile touched his ticks.

"I feel bad for apprentices, y'know." Seedfoot murmured from the other side of the den. "Taking care of the queens and elders."

Dawnpaw nodded her agreement as the last tick dropped from Twigclaw's flank.

"Ah, I don't have any ticks. You can go, Dawnpaw." Seedfoot meowed as Dawnpaw lifted her head and nodded at the elder.

"Thanks," Dawnpaw mumbled behind the stick, trotting out of the den.

She spat the stick into a bush nearby, lifting her head to the sky.

"Dawnpaw?" A voice shook Dawnpaw out of her thoughts. "Are you done with the elders?"

It was Shadepaw, her brother. The tabby tom had snuck up on her quietly. "Hello, Shadepaw. Yes, I'm done with the elders."

"Come on, Firepath said we could go hunting together!" Shadepaw flicked his tail to the camp entrance.

The two headed out quickly, their eyes shining. It was nice to get a break from dealing with ticks and collecting moss.

Shadepaw stopped at a slope. "Dawnpaw, what do you think being a warrior will be like?"

Dawnpaw pondered the question. "I don't know." She answered finally.

Shadepaw tilted his head at her. "Maybe we'll get apprentices of our own." He muttered.

Dawnpaw shrugged. "Training an apprentice sounds boring," she meowed. "Maybe we'll get to go on adventures and fight other cats!"

Shadepaw seemed up for the idea. "Yeah!" He squealed. "Let's go on adventures!"

Dawnpaw's amber eyes blinked. "But what if there are no adventures? Maybe life doesn't want us to go have fun."

Shadepaw looked disapointed. "Maybe we could make our own adventures." He suggested.

"Maybe." Dawnpaw agreed. "But only if StarClan would let us."

-356 words

allegiances

[image]

☁CloudClan☁:
A Clan that sticks to the moorlands and rarely lay around trees. A Clan that hunts rabbits, instead of mice and voles.

Leader: ***Ravenstar* - brown and black splotched tom**

Deputy: ***Beeflight - a pale tabby she-cat***
Apprentice: Silverpaw

Medicine Cat(s): ***Shadefeather* - light golden she-cat with amber eyes**

Warriors:

***Crowcall* - black she-cat with green eyes and a white chest and paws**

***Bumblemist* - gray tom with black stripes**

***Firepath* - ginger tom with blue eyes**

***Rainbranch* - solid gray she-cat**

***Shadebriar* - brown tabby tom with yellow eyes**
Apprentice: Perchpaw

***Brokensky* - tabby tom with black stripes and green eyes**

***Stoneswipe* - dark gray tabby she-cat**

***Ashface* - gray speckled tom**
Apprentice: Brackenpaw

***Dawnstorm* - a brown tabby she-cat with yellow eyes and a white chest and paws**

***Greenflower* - green eyed brown tabby she-cat**

Apprentices:

***Silverpaw* - silver tabby she-cat**

***Brackenpaw* - Speckled yellow tom with yellow eyes**

***Perchpaw* - white and ginger she-cat**

Queens:

***Brindlestorm* - pale gray she-cat, mother of *Thrushkit* (A tabby tom), *Daisykit* (A white she-kit), and *Softkit* (A white and gray she-kit)**

***Bluewing* - blue-gray she-cat with icy-blue eyes, expecting Shadebriar's kits**

Elders:

***Seedfoot* - a brown she-cat with black stripes, missing an ear from battle**

***Twigclaw* -** a dark gray-brown, dusty tom with matted fur

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🌲TreeClan🌲:
A Clan that sticks to the trees, like it's name implies. A Clan that could not live in anything other than the forests near Twolegplace.

Leader: ***Cricketstar* - light ginger she-cat with black speckles**
Apprentice: Scorchpaw

Deputy: ***Mistybriar* - gray tabby tom with dark blue eyes**

Medicine Cat(s): ***Acornwing* - a dark brown tabby tom**

Warriors:
***Firspeck* - brown dappled she-cat**

Olivefur - a green-gray, oddly colored tom with green eyes

Bushbranch **- white tom with blue eyes, half-deaf and identical to Cloudleap**
Apprentice: Fleetpaw

Mossfang **- tortoiseshell she-cat**

Cloudleap **- a white tom, identical to Bushbranch as they are twins; not half-deaf.**

Apprentices:

Fleetpaw **- a gray tabby she-cat**

Scorchpaw **- a black speckled tom**

Queens:

Barkpelt **- gray-brown, dusty-colored she-cat; mother of** ***Vinekit, Hawkkit*** **and** ***Sunkit***

Elders:

Woodfur **- a brown tabby tom**

Sandynose **- a sandy-colored she-cat with blue eyes**

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BayClan:
A Clan that lays beside water. Specifically bays. A Clan that hunts fish and frogs. A Clan that stays near small patches of forest.

Leader: ***Lakestar*** **- A blue-gray tabby tom**

Deputy: ***Brookshine*** **- a brown tabby she-cat with green eyes**

Medicine Cat(s): ***Willowpool*** **- gray tabby she-cat**

Bluetail **- gray-blue tom**

Warriors:

Smallfoot **- dark gray and white speckled tom**

***Darkwing* - A black tom with light gray on his paws and chest**
Apprentice: Flowerpaw

***Whitesky* - white she-cat with amber eyes**

***Seaclaw* - blue-gray tom**

***Sparklepelt* - a ginger tabby she-cat**
Apprentice: Cloudpaw

***Stripefur* - a tabby tom with green eyes**

***Fallowbranch* - fluffy white tom with black stripes**

Apprentices:

Cloudpaw - white tom with green eyes

***Flowerpaw* - ginger and white she-cat**

Queens:

F ennelfern* - white she-cat with black spots, mother of *Spotkit,* and *Wavekit

Elders:

None

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🌿SageClan🌿:
A Clan whom lives in the forest. They are the most liked Clan. SageClan made their camp right beside Twolegplace, and take in many kittypets.

Leader:
***Icestar* - white she-cat with icy-blue eyes**

Deputy:
***Shadowfur* - black tabby tom**

Medicine Cat(s):

***Turtletail* - tortoiseshell tom with green eyes and a stubby tail**

Warriors:
***Currentspot* - gray-blue tom**

***Heatherheart* - brown tabby she-cat**
Apprentice: Featherpaw

***Cardinalheart* - ginger tabby she-cat**

***Fernfur* - gray tom**

***Spottedwing* - tortoiseshell she-cat**

***Pinepelt* - solid brown tom**

Apprentice: Sorrelpaw

***Pumpkin* - ginger tabby tom, formerly a kittypet.**

Apprentices:
***Featherpaw* - silver tabby she-cat**

Sorrelpaw - brown tabby tom with yellow eyes

Queens:
***Bearleap* - brown tabby, mother of Mothkit and Tinykit**

Elders:
None

Map: Hand-drawn by me

Chapter 1

"And stay out!" Dawnstorm growled. She had just finished chasing some SageClan cats away from their territory.

"The borders are closed, mange-pelt!" Crowcall hissed. She sheathed her claws and her pelt bristled once before falling flat.

It was nearly Newleaf. Dawnstorm had been told that the CloudClan borders were closed, but medicine cats were allowed to cross, along with other leaders.

So when two SageClan cats, Heatherheart and Featherpaw, had tried to sneak past the borders, chaos had ensued.

Dawnstorm turned her head to lick at a scratch on her flank as Crowcall's heavy breathing slowed. "Let's go." Crowcall hissed.

The brown tabby she-cat sat up, her back straight. "Shadefeather must have something for this wound."

Crowcall nodded quietly and bounded across the moor. Dawnstorm followed close behind, the wind whipping at her long fur.

By the time they reached camp, the sun had set. Silverpelt shimmered through the light of the setting sun.

Dawnstorm went into the medicine den first, suprised to see Thrushkit and Shadefeather pawing at herbs and speaking quietly.

"Uhm..." Dawnstorm felt like she was intruding. "We...we just chased some SageClan cats away from the border, and one left a nasty scratch."

Shadefeather looked up, eyes full of sympathy. "Now, Thrushkit, if you want to be my apprentice, tell me what to give Dawnstorm for a scratch."

"Dock! Dock leaves!" Thrushkit squeaked. "You...you, uh..." He

trailed off.

"Chew them and rub it on scratches." Shadefeather finished before turning to the herb storage.

She grabbed a thick green leaf, hooking it with her claws quickly. She nipped at it and started to crouch down, chewing on the dock.

Within minutes, Shadefeather spat out the herb onto her paw and inched towards Dawnstorm.

Slapping the herb onto her scratches, Dawnstorm winced from the stinging herb. Shadefeather continued to rub in the poultice.

Dawnstorm knew she shouldn't have winced. If she wanted to be a formidable warrior one day, she wasn't going to shy away from a measly herb.

Shadefeather put her paw down. Dawnstorm purred her thanks and stood. "Thank you, Shadefeather. CloudClan couldn't ask for a better medicine cat."

Shadefeather purred back as Thrushkit poked his head in and looked up at Dawnstorm. "Hey, I'm gonna be the best medicine cat too!"

Shadefeather curled her long fluffy golden tail around Thrushkit's back. "I'm sure you will. It's late. Let's get you back to the nursery, little guy."

Thrushkit's protests faded as Dawnstorm padded out of the den and into the warrior's den.

Ashface and Bumblemist slept quietly. Brokensky groomed his fur. He gave Dawnstorm a cold look as she settled into her nest.

Shadebriar was beside her, and Dawnstorm flicked her ears at Brokensky subtly. "Who put dirt in *his* fresh kill?" She whispered to her brother.

"Hah. I have no idea." Shadebriar whispered back, laying his head on the edge of his nest. "I'm too tired to care. You should get some

sleep, tomorrow night is the Gathering."

"The borders are closed for us, mouse-brain!" Dawnstorm hissed playfully. "We won't go to the Gathering!"

"Oh. Right." Shadebriar yawned. His eyes were already half-closed.

Dawnstorm rolled her eyes and curled into her own nest, but the sight of Brokensky sent shivers down her pelt.

It'll be better tomorrow.

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"All cats that can run with the wind, gather beneath the Cloudrock for a Clan meeting!" Ravenstar's yowl echoed.

Dawnstorm sleepily poked her head out of the warriors den. Shadebriar yawned, and Crowcall growled.

"Why does he have to call a meeting so early?" Bumblemist wondered, tail curling with his mate's tail, Ashface.

Dawnstorm padded towards the Cloudrock. The apprentices were stumbling out of their own den, and the elders muttered quietly.

Ravenstar cleared his throat. "I have made a mistake. The border closing was temporarily in place. From this day forwards, the borders will be open."

Beeflight flicked her tail from the bottom of the Cloudrock. Ravenstar flashed the deputy a glance, and Beeflight returned it.

Dawnstorm smiled. It would be different having the borders open again, but she was happy they would be at the Gathering.

Shadebriar nudged her shoulder, and Dawnstorm turned. "What's up with Brokensky?" He asked.

Dawnstorm followed her brother's gaze. The tabby tom was slinking around creepily, ducking through the dirtplace tunnel.

"I have no idea. He's always been like that." Dawnstorm whispered back.

"Maybe he just needs to use the dirtplace like any normal cat." Shadebriar said.

"Clan dismissed!" Ravenstar called, bounding down from the Cloudrock and padding into his den.

Beeflight began to dismiss patrols for the day.

"Bumblemist, Ashface and Greenflower." She called. "All of you will be on the Dawn Patrol."

The three cats stretched and shook out their fur, leaving camp in a line.

Dawnstorm yawned. "Well, if we aren't on any patrols, do you want to get some fresh-kill with me?" She asked her brother.

Ever since their father, Spotpuddle, died, Dawnstorm and Shadebriar had been closer and ever to each other in camp.

They were the only family that the two had left, other than their mother, Greenflower.

Shadebriar nodded and made his way to the fresh-kill pile. Dawnstorm followed.

She hooked a claw around a fat mouse, settling beside Shadebriar and he picked out a shrew.

"How's Bluewing?" Dawnstorm asked. Bluewing was Shadebriar's mate, and she was already in the nursery.

"She's well. The kits don't have any issues." Shadebriar reported. His eyes glittered with love for his mate and unborn kits.

"That's great." Dawnstorm purred. She'd be happy to be an aunt one day.

"Dawnstorm, Shadebriar!" Beeflight called, padding towards them.

Dawnstorm finished her mouse and looked up. "What's wrong?" She asked the deputy.

"I need you two on a hunting patrol." Beeflight flicked her tail. "You'll be going with Brokensky and Firepath."

Shadebriar's eyes lit up. Dawnstorm knew why. He was excited to spend time with his former mentor.

Dawnstorm's eyes narrowed. She didn't want to be on a patrol with Brokensky, but knew she didn't have a say in what the deputy wanted.

"Alright, Beeflight. We'll be out soon." Dawnstorm meowed, nodding. Beeflight nodded back and padded away.

Once the deputy had been out of earshot, Dawnstorm turned to face her brother. He was still eating his shrew.

"Would you hurry up?" Dawnstorm teased. Shadebriar rolled his eyes as he finished the prey.

"Okay, okay," Shadebriar stretched. "I'm done."

Dawnstorm flicked her tail. "Let's go. Brokensky and Firepath are probably waiting for us."

Shadebriar lifted to his feet, yawning. He followed Dawnstorm to the entrance of camp.

Brokensky's head ducked and his fur bristled as Dawnstorm approached.

What's his problem?

Dawnstorm's fur lay flat across her back as Firepath nodded to her. "Are you ready?" The ginger tom asked.

"Always." Dawnstorm purred. Shadebriar slinked to her side, his eyes tired.

The four cats filed out of camp, into the moor. Birds chirped and

Dawnstorm scented rabbit.

Shadebriar's ears pricked. "What about we go in pairs?" He suggested. The cats in the patrol murmured their agreement.

"I'll go with Firepath." Shadebriar meowed. Dawnstorm flashed him a look. Her littermate knew that she didn't want to be alone with Brokensky.

"Fine." Brokensky spat. "I'm stuck with the she-cat."

Dawnstorm's pelt bristled. "And is there something wrong with that?" She growled.

Brokensky hissed deep in his throat before Firepath cut him off. "Brokensky, be friendly. This is a Clanmate. You aren't a kit!"

As Shadebriar and Firepath padded in one direction, Dawnstorm started walking towards the patch of forest on their territory.

Though reluctant, Brokensky followed. His ears lay flat. The two cats were completely silent.

"If you don't mind, I'll be going to the stream." Brokensky growled. Without giving Dawnstorm time to respond, he pelted into the sunrise ahead.

Dawnstorm let out a grunt and continued sniffing the air for prey. The sweet smell of raven hit her nose.

"Where are you, little bird?" Dawnstorm whispered.

Chirping sounded and Dawnstorm's tail twitched. She crouched low and stalked through the grass.

She caught sight of the raven and pounced. Claw landing squarely on the bird, Dawnstorm bit down on the flailing animal.

The raven went limp. Dawnstorm gripped the prey in her jaws and started on her way back to camp.

"You caught a raven?" A familiar voice said. Dawnstorm looked over

and saw Shadebriar's tabby pelt.

"Yeah." Dawnstorm responded, her voice muffled by the feathery bird.

"Good catch. Let's go back, Firepath said he was gonna find Brokensky and go with him."

Dawnstorm nodded and trotted beside her brother. The she-cat halted quickly as she scented something.

"Do you smell that?" Shadebriar asked, his ears and nose twitching.

Dawnstorm spat the raven onto the floor. It landed with a thump. "Yeah...what is that?"

Shadebriar lifted his nose to the sky, and his tail lashed. "It's like...smoke."

Dawnstorm squinted her green eyes into the distance. An orange-red glow came from the direction of camp, and there was smoke swarming the air above.

"Fire!" Dawnstorm yelped.

= WC: 1505 =

Chapter 2

"A fire?" Shadebriar's panicked voice rose above Dawnstorm's fear.

"Yeah! We have to get everyone out of camp!" Dawnstorm hissed, bounding down the moor. Embers flew around her as she neared camp.

Cats filed out of camp.

Bluewing limped slowly, her eyes painful and full of fear. Shadebriar rushed to his mate's side and propped her up so they could go faster.

Thrushkit squeaked as Brindlestorm picked him up. Daisykit and Softkit trembled in fear as two warriors, Crowcall and Ashface, grabbed each of the kits by the scruff.

Dawnstorm watched in complete fear as Seedpelt fell at the entrance. She struggled to get up before Shadefeather picked her up by the scruff and dragged her out of the way.

It was only then that Dawnstorm noticed so many more cats with injuries. Seedpelt lay unconscious, Bumblemist and Rainbranch licked at their scorched fur.

Firepath bounded forwards. "What happened?" He demanded.

Dawnstorm couldn't speak. Shadebriar explained everything from beside Dawncloud.

"Cats of CloudClan!" Ravenstar called, his voice fearful. "We need to evacuate the territory, or the fire will spread to the moor!"

Cats everywhere nodded their agreement quickly. Dawnstorm snapped back to her senses and looked to her brother.

Shadebriar was comforting Bluewing, who was shaking out of fear. The queen's back leg was trembling, and had burn marks covering

it.

"Where's Beeflight?" Shadefeather's voice rose against Ravenstar. The leader's eyes widened.

"Beeflight!" Crowcall growled. "She's still in camp!"

"Ravenstar, we must go back." Shadefeather murmured. "No Clanmate left behind."

"No." Ravenstar's gaze hardened. "We must go to the other Clans for help."

Dawnstorm's ears pricked. Beeflight was somewhere in that camp, probably dying, and Ravenstar wasn't batting an eye at it.

But she wasn't going to argue with her leader, not in front of every cat in CloudClan.

"Dawnstorm, Shadebriar, Brokensky, Firepath and Rainbranch!" Ravenstar called. "Go to BayClan for help."

Dawnstorm gathered with the selected cats. Her tail was low and between her legs, though bushed up in fear.

As Ravenstar continued to name cats, to go to other Clans, Dawnstorm and her little patrol of cats bounded over the moor and towards BayClan territory.

Dawnstorm pelted through the tall grass, surrounded by her Clanmates. Brokensky had been quiet the entire time, Dawncloud had barely remembered he was there.

Firepath halted, his eyes wide as he motioned at a BayClan patrol very close to them.

Dawnstorm recognized Brookshine, Sparklepelt and Cloudpaw in the patrol. She whipped her head around, her ears flattening. The fire had spread to the tall grass.

Firepath quietly explained what was happening, his voice thick with fear and shame. Maybe he didn't want to get help from the

other Clans.

"I think it's raining!" Shadebriar yowled happily. Dawnstorm was hesitant before a little raindrop smacked her nose. She shook her fur out.

"Hm." Brokensky spat. "Rain."

Firepath fixed the tabby tom with a glare. "What do you mean, Brokensky? Rain right now is a blessing."

Brookshine smiled. "It'll be okay." She told Firepath. "The rain will stop this."

"We'll be on our way. BayClan is here if you need us." Sparklepelt nodded as the BayClan patrol bounded away.

Firepath let out a shaky sigh. "Everything will be alright."

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Dawnstorm bounded through the tall grass once more, her pelt sticking to her sides. Rain poured around her, and the rank smell of smoke floated in the air.

Ravenstar was yowling for his Clanmates. Ashface and Bumblemist comforted each other quietly, lapping at their damp fur.

Greenflower rushed to comfort Shadebriar. Dawnstorm only stood in shock.

Embers still sparked, quickly bouncing around camp and leaving a sizzling mark on the wet grass.

The camp was in shambles. As the cats made their way into the smoky mess, Dawncloud saw the damage first-hand.

The elders den was broken, twigs burnt and leaves shriveled around the berry bush that shelted the elders.

The apprentice den wasn't as bad, but still impacted by the fire.

"Beeflight!" Ravenstar called, his deep mew full of worry. Dawncloud remembered that the deputy had been stuck in camp and no one was able to find her.

Cats everywhere bristled and bounded around to search camp. Dawnstorm joined the search, poking her head into the dirtplace tunnel.

Dawnstorm let out a yowl of suprise and shock. Beeflight's tabby fur littered the dirt, and her body was beside it.

Blood pounded in Dawnstorm's ears as she ran back out to the center of camp. "Beeflight is dead!" She yowled in fear.

More exclamations of shock and rage came after as the Clan gathered. Dawnstorm's paws shook as she lead them to the dirtplace tunnel.

The Clan cats let out shocked, very concerned gasps. Dawnstorm didn't blame them. Their deputy was dead.

Ravenstar let out an anguished screech and dove forwards, digging his claws into Beeflight's fur. Shocked sobs echoed the small tunnel.

It must be so hard to lose a mate. Dawnstorm winced.

Shadebriar watched from afar, Bluewing at his side.

Stoneswipe and Crowcall curled their tails around each other. Dawnstorm remembered that they were Beeflight's kits, along with Brindlestorm, who was shaking uncontrollably.

Ravenstar let out a sniff and stood. "We must sit vigil." He whispered.

An outraged yowl came from the crowd, and Bumblemist took a step forwards. "A cat killed Beeflight!" He hissed.

The Clan was in shocked silence. "No way!" Ravenstar growled back. "She must have pricked herself on a thorn or something, and died from the smoke."

Dawnstorm couldn't help but agree with Ravenstar. "He's right. No one was in camp during the fire." She called out.

Soon the Clan was calling out their own theories. Ravenstar quickly stopped the yowling with a tail flick.

"It doesn't matter who killed Beeflight." He stammered. "We must honor her name by a vigil."

And so there, in the wreckage of the CloudClan camp, Beeflight's body was carried to the center.

Cats gathered, each saying their goodbyes.

"You were an amazing deputy. And mother." Crowcall whispered, sitting close to her dead mother.

Stoneswipe sighed. "I want to follow in your pawsteps, mother. Be the best cat I can be."

Ravenstar padded close to his mate next. "You brought me happiness and joy, Beeflight. I don't think I could ever replace you with any cat." He choked out.

Dawncloud sighed, padding forwards. "Beeflight, you were the best deputy I knew, even if I didn't always like the patrol you gave me. You would have been an amazing leader to CloudClan."

The rest of the cats flew by, whispering goodbyes or sobbing into Beeflight's fur before she was buried.

Then Shadefeather spoke. She lifted her paws to the sky. "May Beeflight find swift running, good hunting and shelter where she sleeps." Shadefeather recited.

The vigil had begun. The night went by slowly, and Dawnstorm took the opportunity to think about how this would affect CloudClan, specifically Ravenstar.

There's no way he'll move on from this in a moon or two. I wonder who the new deputy will be...

Dawnstorm looked around the camp, and a noticable gap in the circle of cats was empty. Ginger, gray and black pelts bristled, but no familiar dark brown tabby fur was in sight.

Where's Brokensky?

= **WC: 1200** =

Chapter 3

Dawnstorm yawed. The new deputy, Rainbranch, was curled up in her own nest, and Bumblemist and Ashface twined their tails together.

Dawnstorm quietly padded past the warriors, leaving the den. Snores could be heard from the apprentice den.

Stoneswipe, watching the entrance, gave Dawnstorm a funny look. "What're you up to?" The senior warrior asked.

Dawnstorm shrugged. "Couldn't sleep." She replied. "Any chance I could go out for some late-night hunting?"

Stoneswipe took a step away from the entrance. "Always good to have extra prey. Go ahead."

Dawnstorm nodded her thanks to Stoneswipe, ducking out of camp. Her paws lead her to the little clearing where apprentices trained.

Clawmarks scored the ground, from where the apprentices trained, and Dawnstorm sighed. She leapt onto a flat rock, beginning to groom her fur.

The crack of a twig snapping brought Dawnstorm's attention forwards. The bushes ahead of her rustled.

A little tabby tom stuck his head out of the bushes. Dawnstorm's claws unfurled in an act of defence.

"Sorry, sorry!" The stranger ducked back into the bushes for a minute before emerging once more. His tail was bushed in fear and tucked behind his legs.

"Is this Clan territory? I can leave-" He started. His yellow-gold eyes drifted to the ground. Dawnstorm sheathed her claws, looking at the rouge warily.

"Wait. What are you doing here?" Dawnstorm leapt off the rock and made her way to face the rouge.

"I was out hunting, and I scented a cat- um, you, and then I guess I followed the scent onto your territory." The stranger explained. "My name's Chirp."

Dawnstorm was hesitant. Should she tell this loner her name? He didn't seem to be a threat. Her heard pounded in her chest.

"I'm Dawnstorm. Of CloudClan." She finally said. "You're going to leave without a fight, yes?"

Chirp nodded. "If you want me to, of course." He dipped his head politely.

"It would help us both." Dawnstorm shrugged. "You leave, and no one will hurt you."

Chirp's eyes flashed with fear. "Uhm...Okay. I'll leave now." He scampered into the bushes, his tail waving.

Dawnstorm was left in silence, but not for long. A dark brown paw appeared once more from the bushes, pushing a fat mouse towards Dawnstorm.

"Here's for the trouble I caused. Sorry again. I'll be leaving." Chirp's voice echoed, followed by the pattering of pawsteps.

Dawnstorm purred, accepting the mouse. She grabbed it by the tail and started on her way back.

What a strange rouge. I've never seen one so...friendly.

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Dawnstorm yawned, stretching in her nest.

"Hey! Watch it!" Shadebriar's tired voice yelped. "You just kicked me!"

"Shut it, Shadebriar." Firepath exclaimed sleepily.

"Sorry." Dawnstorm whispered as quiet as she could. Dawnlight filtered through the thickly woven branches of the warrior's den.

She yawned quietly, standing and weaving around the other cats around her.

The snores and mutters from the warrior's den faded as Dawnstorm made her way to the fresh kill pile.

It's low. I should go on the Dawn Patrol.

As she was about to head out, Dawnstorm paused. She heard a little voice that sounded oddly familiar calling her name.

"Hey! What's your name again? Dawnstripe? Hey!" The tiny voice called.

Surely it isn't a Clanmate, Dawnstorm thought. *A Clanmate would know my name.*

Dawnstorm whipped her head around to see Chirp's head sticking out from the bushes that surrounded their camp.

She raced towards him, thanking StarClan that no one was on guard that morning. *Trust that rouge to get me into trouble only a day after I met him!*

Dawnstorm couldn't hold back a furious hiss. Her tail tip twitching, and glared at Chirp. "What in *StarClan's name* are you doing here?" Dawnstorm asked.

A shuffling sounded behind the CloudClan warrior, and she whipped her head around.

She watched as Perchpaw yawned, sleepily exiting the apprentices den.

Dawnstorm's gaze turned back to Chirp, pushing his head back into the bushes.

"What are you doing?!" Chirp protested. "Hey!"

"Shut it, and stay put!" Dawnstorm hissed before sitting down casually.

Perchpaw waved his ginger tail at Dawnstorm, meeting with Shadebriar at the entrance to camp. Shadebriar gave Dawnstorm a curious look before leaving with his apprentice.

"Can I come out now?" Chirp's muffled voice sounded quietly.

Dawnstorm reached into the bush and hook a claw onto his scruff, dragging him out of the bushes.

Chirp yelped as he landed on the dusty ground with a loud thump. "Ow!"

"Shut it!" Dawnstorm slapped her tail across his mouth. "What are you doing here?"

Chirp looked up at her. "I can't be a rouge anymore. Please let me into your Clan, I won't be trouble."

"That isn't for me to decide, mouse-brain." Dawnstorm hissed. "You'll have to talk to the leader, Ravenstar."

Dawnstorm didn't like the sound of a rouge joining the Clan, not now at least. Beeflight's death had crushed their leader, and he was barely himself.

Chirp nodded. "Okay. I'll talk to him. Take me to this...Raven...star."

Dawnstorm inwardly cringed, but lead Chirp to Ravenstar's den anyways. After all, it wasn't her that wanted to join the Clan.

Stoneswipe blinked sleepily, her eyes bleary and tired as Dawnstorm approached. Stoneswipe noticed the intruder, Chirp, and her hackles lifted.

"Who is this...*rouge?"* Stoneswipe growled, her claws unsheathed. Dawnstorm took a step back, and Chirp squeaked from behind her.

"I think it's better if he explains that." Dawnstorm took a step out of the way, leaving Chirp to face the angry Stoneswipe.

"Who are you? What business do you have with CloudClan?" Stoneswipe interrogated Chirp, who's gaze flitted from side to side nervously.

Chirp cleared his throat. "My name is Chirp. I come from Twolegplace, beyond the mountains. Only a little bit ago I decided to become a rouge, or maybe a loner... Anyways...um...yeah." he stuttered.

I never knew he came from Twolegplace. He does seem...soft..for a rouge. Not many cats make it from Twolegplace, though. Dawnstorm observed.

Stoneswipe listened closely to the rouge, her eyes narrowing. She sheathed her claws, clearly trying to look less aggressive.

Dawnstorm's shoulder fur fell flat, and she hadn't even noticed it was bristled. She expected the two to break out in fight, but she was glad they didn't.

"Dawnstorm," Stoneswipe's voice snapped her out of her thoughts. Chirp was eagerly waiting beside her, and Stoneswipe had moved to let them pass into the seemingly empty den.

"Go ahead, but don't argue. Chirp, there's no guarantee that he'll let you join." Stoneswipe whispered. The two other cats nodded, making their way into the den.

"Ravenstar?" Dawnstorm called when Chirp hadn't made a sound.

A weak whimper came from a nest at the back of the dimly lit den. "Ravenstar?" Dawnstorm called again.

Ravenstar lifted his head, green eyes flashing in the dark. Dawnstorm felt a wave of fear and an unsettling feeling.

Chirp squeaked in fear beside her.

Maybe he wouldn't make a good warrior. He's too cowardly.

But Dawnstorm rethought that when Chirp took a shaky step towards the CloudClan leader.

"Hello, mister...um..Ravenstar." Chirp stuttered, his tail twitching in fear. "I-"

"Who are you?" Ravenstar's hackles lifted and he bared his teeth in a growl. Chirp slunk back and hid behind Dawnstorm.

"Ravenstar, this is Chirp. He's a rouge. He wants to join CloudClan." Dawnstorm explained, her shoulder fur bristling.

Ravenstar eyed the rouge carefully, his gaze cautious. "Fine." He spat. "If he can train as an apprentice, he can join."

Chirp's ears flicked in surprise, as if he didn't know what to say. Dawnstorm just assumed that he didn't expect Ravenstar to allow a rouge into CloudClan.

"Okay! I'll do it! Is there like a list of rules?" Chirp asked, his tail high in the air.

Ravenstar's gaze flickered to Dawnstorm "You'll be mentoring him, since you were the one that decided to let him into our camp without a patrol."

Dawnstorm ducked her head. "Alright. Sorry for any trouble I caused."

Ravenstar nodded, as if proud of himself. "You're dismissed."

Chirp and Dawnstorm slowly made their way out of the den, and Dawnstorm turned to Chirp as soon as they were in the middle of the clearing.

"Okay. Being an apprentice isn't easy." Dawnstorm began warily. "Especially if you're old enough to be a warrior."

Ravenstar's commanding yowl for a Clan meeting sounded, and Dawnstorm flicked her tail to signal that Chirp should sit.

"Cats of CloudClan!" The leader called. "I am proud to announce we have taken in a rouge! His name is Chirp, and he will be training as an apprentice until he can earn his warrior name."

Chirp's tail brushed the ground lightly, his eyes gleaming with excitement.

"Chirp, step forwards." Ravenstar commanded. The rouge took a wary step towards the Cloudrock before he bounded forwards.

"You have chosen to join a Clan, and you will train as an apprentice. From this day forwards, and until you earn your warrior name, you will be named Chirppaw." Ravenstar recited.

Chirppaw dipped his head. "Thank you, Ravenstar."

"Dawnstorm will mentor you. She has shown compassion and loyalty to her Clanmates and I trust she will teach you the same." Ravenstar called. Dawnstorm felt her pelt get hot as the Clan looked towards her.

She dipped her head as Chirppaw did, in deep respect. "Thank you, Ravenstar." She repeated.

"Clan dismissed!" Ravenstar bounded back to his den.

Dawnstorm and Chirppaw met at the center of the clearing. "What's first? Battle training? Hunting?"

Dawnstorm let out a little purr. "Nope. You need to get some rest. Meet me here in the morning tomorrow." She pointed her tail at the apprentice den.

Chirppaw did as he was told, pelting to the den. Dawnstorm whipped around and turned to the warrior's den.

I just hope he'll be skilled enough to pass this apprenticeship.

= **WC: 1646** =

Chapter 4

Dawnstorm listened to the chirping birds and the sound of leaves crunching under her paws. Chirppaw bounded to her side.

"Okay." Dawnstorm halted in her tracks, leaping up onto a small rock and sitting. "Chirppaw, what do you already know?"

Chirppaw seemed to ponder the question before looking up. "Well...I know how to hunt. And fight. But I don't really know the...um, rules around here."

"You're lucky," Dawnstorm observed. "There's a Gathering tonight, and you'll probably get to go."

Chirppaw's eyes shined with happiness. "Cool!" He exclaimed. His tail brushed the ground quickly.

"Get ready, this is a lot of talking." Dawnstorm settled onto the rock. "The rules we follow are called the Warrior's Oath. Every cat swears to follow it when they become a full warrior."

"It's a set of ten rules, like this," Dawnstorm cleared her throat. "StarClan's word is law. A Clan cat must reject the soft life of a kittypet or loner, and medicine cats rule over their leaders in danger."

Chirppaw watched with wide eyes, and Dawnstorm continued. "Kits and elders are fed first, and no cat can put another in danger purposely."

"A cat cannot be deputy unless they have had one apprentice, and hunting on the other Clan's territories isn't allowed. Also no fighting at the Gatherings. And one Clan cannot let another Clan fall because they made a mistake." Dawnstorm finished, flicking her ears.

Chirppaw gasped. "How do you remember all that?" He asked.

Dawnstorm just shrugged.

"I just do. It's part of being a Clan cat." She replied, leaping down from the rock. "Come on, let's go see the territory."

Chirppaw walked beside the warrior as Dawnstorm weaved around trees. She halted at the flowing river that ran between BayClan's territory and CloudClan's territory.

As Chirppaw went forwards to splash in the river, Dawnstorm let out a warning hiss. She could scent BayClan scent. "Don't cross that line. Smell that fishy smell? That's BayClan. We aren't allowed to cross the river."

Chirppaw backed up, ducking his head as if ashamed. "Sorry." He mumbled.

Dawnstorm put her tail on his shoulder. "Don't be. Everyone makes mistakes." She encouraged.

Chirppaw looked up at her and smiled before turning to start walking again, followed by Dawnstorm.

The she-cat suddenly froze. Chirppaw whipped around. "What's wrong?" He asked. Dawnstorm only turned back to the river.

A patrol of BayClan cats waited at the other side of the flowing river, their eyes curious.

Dawnstorm played it cool, her tail low to the ground as she flicked her ears in greeting to the BayClan patrol.

"Hey, Dawnstorm! Who's the new cat?" A familiar voice asked. It was Brookshine, the BayClan deputy.

"Ah, nothing. He's, um... He's nobody." Dawnstorm stuttered, urging Chirppaw to walk again.

But the former loner didn't budge. "My name's Chirppaw." He told Brookshine. The deputy only smiled. "I'll see you at the Gathering then, huh?"

Chirppaw nodded eagerly and Dawnstorm hooked onto his tail with her claw, dragging him away. "Goodbye, now!" She called to the BayClan cats.

As soon as the river's flowing sound died away, Chirppaw yelped. Dawnstorm's eyes blazed. "In that situation, don't speak up. I don't know if you'll even be at that Gathering!" Dawnstorm hissed sternly.

"Fine, fine." Chirppaw huffed. He looked angry at his mentor, but stayed quiet as they made their way to the other end of the territory where the moor ended.

"Do you know how to hunt in tall grass?" Dawnstorm asked, tilting her head at the apprentice.

Chirppaw didn't speak, but crouched low and sniffed at the air. Within a minute, he bolted through the grass towards a scrap of fur.

The rabbit he was chasing took a leap into the air and fled, but Chirppaw was faster. He hooked onto the rabbit's back and flung it backwards, wrestling with it for a minute before it went limp.

Dawnstorm let out a gasp of shock. She had never been taught to hunt that way. As Chirppaw made his way back to her, Dawnstorm noticed he was limping.

"What's wrong?" She wondered. Chirppaw only shrugged.

"It's fine." He dropped the rabbit at Dawnstorm's paws. "That happens all the time."

As Dawnstorm peered closer, she noticed that the apprentice had little wounds and scars hidden beneath thick fur.

"We'd better get you to Shadefeather." Dawnstorm muttered, reaching down to grip the rabbit in her own jaws.

Chirppaw looked confused. "Who's Shadefeather?" He asked.

Dawnstorm paused. "It's our medicine cat. She helps with all the healing and recovery and stuff in CloudClan."

"Does every Clan have one of those?" Chirppaw wondered aloud. Dawnstorm nodded.

It's a good sign he's asking questions. It'll help him in the long-run.

Dawnstorm made her way back to camp, making sure that Chirppaw followed quick behind her.

They ducked through the tunnel, and Dawnstorm bounded to the fresh-kill pile. She dropped the rabbit, and a purr sounded from behind her.

"Nice catch, Dawnstorm!" Greenflower, her mother, nodded to her daughter.

"Aw, it's not mine." Dawnstorm's tail brushed the ground. "It's Chirppaw's."

Greenflower looked even more impressed. "Well tell him I said 'good job'!"

"I will." Dawnstorm purred.

Chirppaw was waiting for her at the entrance to the warrior's den. She lead him silently to the medicine den.

"Shadefeather?" Dawnstorm called into the dimly lit den. Shadefeather poked her head out, her fur ruffled as if she hadn't slept in a couple days.

"Chirppaw got scratched by a rabbit." Dawnstorm explained. "I was worried it might be infected."

"Rabbit claws are quite sharp-" Shadefeather muttered, her eyes flitting from side to side as she looked around. She dove to the herb store, grabbing some leaves that Dawnstorm didn't know.

"Here." Shadefeather started to chew the leaves before spitting them onto her paw. When Chirppaw looked hesitant, Shadefeather gave an irritated flick of her tail.

"For StarClan's sake, it's not gonna bite!" Shadefeather snapped, her

eyes narrowing. Chirppaw whimpered and held his paw out.

That's weird. Dawnstorm let her gaze fall to the ground. Shadefeather was never normally like this, mean and grouchy.

Dawnstorm turned to look back at Chirppaw and the medicine cat, and she had finished with the poultice.

"There. Scram!" Shadefeather hissed. Chirppaw looked at Dawnstorm for approval to leave, and Dawnstorm nodded. "Go get a bite to eat and you can rest." She told her apprentice.

Shadefeather turned to look at Dawnstorm. "Hey, there's something important I have to tell you." The medicine cat padded closer with a whisper.

"I got a prophecy." Shadefeather hissed quietly, her tail bushing up in fear. Dawnstorm felt a shiver go down her spine.

"*Dawn's break will stop the sky, four shall become three, and the Clans in the forest shall fall.* "

Chapter 5

Dawnstorm stared at the medicine cat. "This can't possibly have to do with me. I've never been *that* important."

Shadefeather's eyes were wild with panic. "Just go, shoo! I don't need anyone else knowing about this prophecy!"

Dawnstorm was taken aback. "What about Ravenstar? Or Crowcall? Or the other Clans?"

But Shadefeather didn't seem to hear. "Go, go!" She whispered, swatting at Dawnstorm with a paw until the warrior scurried away.

Weird. Dawnstorm let out a hiss of fury. How could she be in a prophecy? She was barely respected much in her own Clan, so what made her so special?

Shadebriar stretched by the entrance to camp, Perchpaw waiting beside him. The apprentice looked wide-eyed at Dawnstorm before turning to her mentor.

"All cats old enough to run with the wind gather beneath the Cloudrock to hear my words!" Ravenstar's howl made Dawnstorm turn her head.

As cats parted from their dens to gather in the clearing, Dawnstorm saw her littermate padding towards her.

"What happened in there?" Shadebriar whispered, pointing his tail towards the medicine den where an anxious Shadefeather exited.

"I'll tell you later." Dawnstorm whispered back as Ravenstar started to speak. "We can't really talk now."

Shadebriar nodded a little and Dawnstorm turned her attention to the leader.

"Cats of CloudClan!" Ravenstar addressed them all. "Though we

must get ready for the Gathering, three apprentices are ready to become warriors."

Dawnstorm watched as all the heads in the clearing turned to the three littermates, Silverpaw, Perchpaw and Brackenpaw.

Ravenstar continued, "Perchpaw, please step forwards." The ginger and white she-cat obeyed, stepping forwards hesitantly.

"You are of age to become a warrior, and I'm sure Shadebriar taught you well. Do you swear to StarClan you will follow the Warrior's Oath once you become a warrior?"

Perchpaw looked a little nervous, "I do." She said loudly. Her littermates seemed to be silently cheering her on.

"Then, from this day forwards you will be named Perchshade, after your mentor." Ravenstar meowed.

Dawnstorm turned to Shadebriar, her eyes shining as she saw her excited littermate. His tail lashed the ground like a kit who just got to go into the clearing for the first time.

"Silverpaw, step forwards." Ravenstar instructed. The silver tabby took a shaky breath and bounded towards the Cloudrock.

"You are of-age to become a warrior, and I believe that even though Beeflight is gone, she will watch over you in StarClan. Will you uphold the Warrior's Oath?"

Silverpaw looked determined. Dawnstorm could almost see herself again becoming a warrior for the first time. "I do." Silverpaw meowed.

"Then you will be named Silverclaw from this day forwards." Ravenstar told her as the new warrior padded back into the crowd to join Perchshade.

"Brackenpaw, step forwards." Ravenstar flicked his tail as the speckled white tom walked up.

"You are of-age to become a warrior, and I am certain that Ashface

was a wonderful mentor." Ravenstar mewed. Dawnstorm turned to see Bumblestripe and Ashface intertwine their tails quietly.

"Will you follow the Warrior's Oath?" Ravenstar asked the apprentice. Brackenpaw nodded. "I will."

Ravenstar looked pleased. "Then you will be named Brackenflight from this day forwards."

Dawnstorm watched. Surely this was an exciting day for all three of the new warriors.

The threee littermates made their way to their mentors, thanking them and getting praise.

As Perchshade made her way to Shadebriar, Dawnstorm decided to let them be together alone.

She padded to the edge of the clearing, where the nursery was, and started grooming her fur. She had to look nice for the Gathering.

As soon as Dawnstorm settled, Ravenstar's yowl sounded and the Clan began to gather towards the entrance of camp.

As the cats filed out of camp, Dawnstorm followed at the end. Chirppaw bounded towards her. "What did I miss?" He asked.

Dawnstorm looked at him. "A warrior ceremony." She said. Chirppaw looked crestfallen.

"It's nothing much." Dawnstorm assured him. "Perchpaw, Silverpaw and Brackenpaw got their warrior names and now they're Perchshade, Silverclaw and Brackenflight."

Chirppaw looked a little more happy as the two folllowed the Clan. "That's nice." He said.

Dawnstorm turned her attention to her surroundings. Tall grass waved ahead of them and the moon was starting to rise above them into the sky.

As the cats of CloudClan neared the Gathering Tree, Dawnstorm

halted with the rest of the cats. Chirppaw stopped later, nearly falling onto Bumblemist's tail.

The gray tom whipped his head around to glare at Chirppaw, his eyes blazing. "Keep to yourself, Chirppaw." He hissed.

Dawnstorm scoffed at her Clanmate. "Shut it, Bumblemist." She snapped. "It was an accident."

Chirppaw's tail tucked between his legs, looking ashamed. "Sorry, Bumblemist."

Dawnstorm gave the gray tom a stare before sitting down. The Clan wasn't moving, perhaps Ravenstar hadn't given the call to enter yet.

Then the Clan came crashing into the small clearing. Dawnstorm was nearly trampled as cats swarmed around her and dove into the Gathering below.

Dawnstorm leapt down into the clearing, sniffing the area. A fishy scent matted the air, and Dawnstorm turned to see some BayClan cats. Tree sap scent hit her nose too, and she noticed that TreeClan was there as well.

"Where's SageClan?" Dawnstorm wondered, not realizing she'd said it aloud. Firepath's ginger pelt stopped beside her. "Perhaps they're late."

Dawnstorm shrugged, turning to face the Clanbranch. It was the tall oak tree that the leaders sat upon to call the Gatherings.

As she watched Ravenstar climb onto the ancient tree, Chirppaw's voice sounded.

"Hi, I'm Chirppaw. What's your name?" He was telling a cat. Dawnstorm scented BayClan, and turned her head to see what her apprentice was up to.

A little white tom snarled at Chirppaw. "You look too old to be an apprentice. Stop lying, mouse-brain." The BayClan apprentice hissed. Dawnstorm recognized him as Cloudpaw.

Chirppaw flinched, as if Cloudpaw had struck a paw of claws to his face. Dawnstorm trotted forwards.

"Hello, Cloudpaw." Dawnstorm dipped her head as she sat next to Chirppaw. The CloudClan apprentice looked relieved to see his mentor, and Dawnstorm smiled at him.

Cloudpaw looked up at her, his ears twitching. He clearly was ashamed that he had been caught being rude at another Clan's apprentice, especially at a Gathering.

"Maybe you'd like to tell your mentor. You know, about being...*disrespectful,* to Chirppaw here." Dawnstorm teased, her eyes shining.

At that moment, Cloudpaw's mentor, Sparklepelt, let out a growl from behind him. The apprentice turned around with a yelp.

"Apologize." Sparklepelt hissed. "Now." Cloudpaw nodded in fear and looked towards Chirppaw. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." He blurted.

Chirppaw nodded back, flicking his tail. "I accept your apology." Chirppaw dipped his head. Dawnstorm motioned for Chirppaw to follow her as they left the BayClan cats arguing.

"Thanks. Sorry I talked to him, was I not supposed to do that?" Chirppaw fretted. "Isn't that a rule? Talk at the Gatherings?"

Dawnstorm slapped her tail over Chirppaw's muzzle. "You didn't do anything wrong. Cloudpaw was just cranky."

Chirppaw's shoulders relaxed and he looked more calm. Then Cricketstar's yowl sounded, followed by the other leaders voices.

"The Gathering has started!" Lakestar called. "Everyone please listen."

Dawnstorm sat beside Chirppaw as the Clans grew silent, waiting for their leaders to speak.

"Cricketstar, you may speak first." Ravenstar took a step back from the branch, digging his claws into the bark to steady himself.

The TreeClan leader stood. "Thank you, Ravenstar. TreeClan is all well. Firspeck has given birth to her kits, Spotkit, Wrenkit and Cinderkit." The Clans cheered below at the news, purring happily.

"BayClan is well." Lakestar spoke up. "We've been noticing more pike in the river than normal, but our warriors have driven them a bit downstream."

Ravenstar's eyes flashed across the gathered cats. "CloudClan has suffered a terrible fate. A fire struck our camp, and we still don't know what caused it. Our deputy, Beeflight, is with StarClan now. Rainbranch is the new deputy of CloudClan."

Lakestar dipped his head. "So I heard. Brookshine told me all about it."

Cricketstar's tail flicked sadly. "May Beeflight find swift running and shelter where she sleeps." She murmured.

Ravenstar's gaze flashed from sadness and grief to realization. "But one death will not crush CloudClan!" He told the Clans.

Dawnstorm disagreed. When they weren't in front of the other Clans, Ravenstar still grieved for his dead mate.

"We have taken in a loner, named Chirp. He trains under Dawnstorm, and was renamed Chirppaw." Ravenstar announced.

The Clans cheered. "Chirppaw, Chirppaw!" They yowled his name. Dawnstorm looked to her apprentice. His gaze was shining with happiness and warmth.

Finally, Icestar took a step forwards. "We have two new warriors. Featherfall and Sorrelleaf. And Beepaw and Fogpaw have become apprentices."

"Beepaw, Fogpaw!" The Clans cheered, purring. "Featherfall! Sorrelleaf!"

Dawnstorm joined in on the chanting, looking towards the four SageClan cats who looked about ready to burst with pride.

But as soon as the Gathering had started, the Clans parted onto their own territories and went back home.

Dawnstorm could barely keep her eyes open when she reached camp with the rest of her Clan, her eyes sleepy and clouded.

But she had also been forced to be on the night shift. Dawnstorm settled, trying to keep herself awake. Her eyes widened when she heard Chirppaw's voice.

"Hey...um...Dawnstorm?" Chirppaw stammered. "It's lonely in the apprentice den... could I watch over camp with you?" He asked.

Dawnstorm nodded, tapping the ground beside her with her tail. Chirppaw scrambled over and smiled at her.

As Dawnstorm watched, waiting for sunlight to appear over the shimmering tall grass of the moor, the she-cat felt a burst of pride for her apprentice.

= **WC: 1622** =

Chapter 6

Dawnstorm watched as Chirppaw dashed through the tall grass, his eyes focused ahead. He was chasing a rabbit. It had been about a week and a half since the Gathering.

Chirppaw had been improving, even though he knew most of his training from his days as a loner. Dawnstorm thought she was a pretty good mentor.

Chirppaw trotted back, carrying the rabbit he had caught by it's scruff. "Did I do good?" He asked, dropping the prey by Dawnstorm's paws.

"Always." Dawnstorm purred. It was true, he had been doing very well. In fact, today was his assessment. Of course, Dawnstorm hadn't expected him to train for very long.

"You'll put in a good word with Ravenstar for me?" Chirppaw's voice went high and his eyes gleamed.

"Of course." Dawnstorm dipped her head. "Let's get back to camp. You can share that rabbit with someone."

As the two walked by, Dawnstorm pondered. Chirppaw did seem ready for life as a CloudClan warrior. And training in the last week and a half had been Dawnstorm's escape from that mouse-brained prophecy.

"Do you really think Ravenstar will let me become a real warrior?" Chirppaw's voice made Dawnstorm come back to her senses.

She nodded. "Of course. Ravenstar doesn't go back on his word. It isn't like he'll make you an apprentice and then make you go back to being a loner." Dawnstorm told him.

Chirppaw kept walking. "Good." He nodded as if satisfied with the answer.

The two picked up the pace, bounding across the moor. Chirppaw was behind a bit because of the rabbit he hauled with him. Dawnstorm felt her ears flatten against the wind as she ran.

The two cats came to a halt at the entrance to camp, walking in slowly. Dawnstorm's eyes adjusted to the sunlight after being in the tunnel, and she looked around.

Thrushkit, Daisykit and Softkit let out squeals and squeaks of happiness, dashing across the clearing as Brindlestorm watched from near the nursery.

Bumblestripe and Ashface dozed in the sun, and Perchfeather and Silverclaw were grooming by the Cloudrock. Shadebriar watched Bluewing from the nursery entrance, then going inside and curling beside his mate.

Though Dawnstorm never had the idea to get a mate, she almost longed for that feeling of love and support. But for now, her Clanmates would be there to support her.

Dawnstorm just never liked that type of commitment. Chirppaw snapped her out of her thoughts as he raced to put the rabbit on the pile of prey ahead.

Dawnstorm sighed, flicking her tail slowly. Chirppaw approached her. "What now?" He asked.

Dawnstorm pointed her muzzle towards the apprentice's den. "Go rest. Or do whatever you'd like. I'm going to have a word with Ravenstar."

Chirppaw nodded, trotting in the direction of the den. Dawnstorm went the opposite way, towards the Cloudrock where Ravenstar's den was.

Brokensky guarded the den's entrance, his eyes tired and his fur bristled. Dawnstorm guessed he didn't even want to be there.

"Dawnstorm." Brokensky greeted the she-cat with a deep growl. "What's wrong?"

"Absolutely nothing." Dawnstorm hissed back, trying to keep her fur flat. She had an odd feeling about Brokensky, but didn't quite know what this feeling meant.

"I'm here to talk about Chirppaw." Dawnstorm explained, her tail swishing low to the ground.

"Ah. The rouge." Brokensky muttered, swiping his own tail on the ground. "Go ahead, I suppose."

"Loner." Dawnstorm corrected with a whisker-twitch, entering the den.

Ravenstar lifted his head. For once, his fur seemed groomed and he looked excited.

"Ravenstar, I believe that Chirppaw has passed his assessment." Dawnstorm dipped her head at the leader.

Ravenstar pondered her words. "I didn't see why he wouldn't. I'll hold the ceremony now."

The splotched brown and black tom stretched, flicking his tail as he went past Dawnstorm and left the den.

The she-cat jumped down from the Cloudrock, gathering with the rest of the cats in the clearing as Ravenstar called a meeting.

Perchshade and Brackenflight each glanced at each other and went closer to the Cloudrock, followed by a yawning Greenflower and most of the warriors of CloudClan.

Chirppaw stretched outside of the apprentice den, his eyes sparkling as he saw the Clan gather. Dawnstorm guessed that he knew what was about to happen.

"Cats of CloudClan, we have an apprentice who has proven themselves worthy of becoming a warrior." Ravenstar looked at Chirppaw and the Clan looked as well.

"Started as a loner, Chirppaw has proven worthy to join CloudClan as a full warrior. Dawnstorm has trained you well in the ways of

Clan life." Ravenstar meowed.

Dawnstorm felt a rush of pride as Chirppaw took a step towards Ravenstar. The leader looked down at him. Was this what it was like to have an apprentice?

"Chirppaw, from this day forwards, you will be named Chirpfeather. The Clan honors your loyalty and dedication to your Clanmates." Ravenstar recited.

Dawnstorm looked at her former apprentice, her pelt bristling in happiness. Chirpfeather looked just as happy.

The meeting wasn't over yet, though. Ravenstar continued.

"We have more cats to change their rank in our Clan today than just one." Ravenstar announced, flashing a glance at Firepath. The ginger tom went forwards.

Firepath has served CloudClan since before I was kitted. Dawnstorm watched Firepath closely. *He deserves a good couple seasons of rest and relaxation as an elder.*

Ravenstar looked down at Firepath, smiling at the senior warrior. "You have been a loyal, compassionate warrior of CloudClan, and there is nothing that could have stopped you from being the best." The leader meowed. "Firepath, will you still serve your Clan as an elder, even if it costs your life?"

Firepath dipped his head. "I will, Ravenstar."

"Very well then." Ravenstar meowed. "You are now an elder of CloudClan."

As the Clan chanted the elder's name, Dawnstorm started chanting too. Firepath had been her brother's mentor and almost like her own mentor, Rainbranch.

As Ravenstar finished the meeting and the Clan started dissapearing back into their dens, Dawnstorm trotted to the medicine den. She needed more information about that flea-ridden prophecy.

As she entered the den, Shadefeather glared at her. "What?" The medicine cat snapped.

I've never seen her act like this. The prophecy must be getting to her. Dawnstorm felt the slightest bit of concern, and stopped her shoulder fur from bristling.

"I need more." Dawnstorm hissed. "More information. About the prophecy."

Chapter 7

Shadefeather's eyes widened. "Surely...surely you're joking." She ducked, her ears twitching.

"I'm not." Dawnstorm planted her paws into the ground, determined to not leave until she got more information.

"But I don't know any more than what I told you." Shadefeather stumbled over her words. "It's just not possible."

"Oh, it is." Dawnstorm sat down, gazing warily at the medicine cat. Shadefeather let out a sigh and caved, explaining.

"Fine." Shadefeather dropped her head, her eyes like slits. "I believe the words have to do with you, Dawnstorm. You...You will stop the sky, and save the Clans."

Dawnstorm watched the medicine cat, getting an uneasy feeling that rippled across her pelt.
"But how?" She asked, dread hitting her like a stone as she waited for the answer.

"That I do not know." Shadefeather hissed. "Perhaps something will happen with the sky, and something will stop the Clans. You will save them, Dawnstorm."

Before Dawnstorm could utter another word, Ravenstar cleared his throat from behind them. Dawnstorm's shoulder fur bristled and she whipped to see the CloudClan leader.

"What's this talk about? Dawnstorm, are you injured?" Ravenstar looked faintly concerned, and Shadefeather growled low.

"I'm not hurt," Dawnstorm began. At this point, she didn't care if Shadefeather wanted this to be a secret. "Shadefeather was discussing a prophecy with me."

Ravenstar's tail ruffled. "Shadefeather?" He seemed to catch himself

before he overreacted. "Care to explain?"

Shadefeather flashed an angry glare at Dawnstorm, but the warrior crept closer to her leader's side.

"Dawn's break will stop the sky. Three will become four, and the Clans in the forest shall fall." Shadefeather recited, her tail lashing across the dirt.

Dawnstorm turned to see Ravenstar's expression. He looked focused and motivated already to find out the answer.

"Dawnstorm? Are you a part of this?" He asked. Ravenstar's white tail smoothed.

Dawnstorm hesitate before speaking. "Yes, Ravenstar. Shadefeather believes that I will 'stop the sky', whatever that means."

"Dawnstorm, this is serious. Why didn't you tell me earlier?" Ravenstar's judging gaze landed on Dawnstorm, and the warrior's pelt got hot.

"Um...Shadefeather told me not to. She said she didn't want any cat knowing about it." Dawnstorm shifted her own gaze to Shadefeather, who looked up at Ravenstar fearfully.

"I suppose that's fair." Ravenstar's whiskers twitched, and Dawnstorm guessed he was trying to keep calm. "Shadefeather, I'd like to have a word with you. Dawnstorm, you can go."

Dawnstorm's paws itched to stay and listen, but she obeyed and stalked out of the den. Cats gathered around her.

"Dawnstorm?" A little kit's voice chirped. "Is Shadefeather sick?"

Dawnstorm looked down at her paws to see Thrushkit, Softkit and Daisykit. "Of course not. Why would you think that?"

Thrushkit only flicked his tail. Softkit took a step forwards. "Shadefeather's been really weird. Like she doesn't want to talk."

Dawnstorm hesitated before she spoke again. "Shadefeather's just

tired. She's done a lot of work as the only medicine cat, you know."

Thrushkit looked satisfied. "Good. I don't want her to go away before I'm an apprentice. Can I go say 'hi' to her now?"

Dawnstorm's ears twitched as the kit bounded forwards. She extended a paw and Thrushkit came to a halt before hitting it.

"No. No visits. Ravenstar's talking with her." Dawnstorm told the kits, trying not to sound too mean.

"Why not? You were visiting before!" Daisykit whined. Dawnstorm looked around for an escape from the pestering kits, but no cat was paying attention.

"Ravenstar wanted to talk alone. I just went in before him." Dawnstorm explained. "Maybe you can visit Shadefeather later." She told Thrushkit. "Now...um, scurry on back to the nursery."

As Dawnstorm went to walk away, passing the kits, Softkit's whimper sounded. "Does Shadefeather not like us?" She asked. Thrushkit flanked his sister protectively.

"Of course Shadefeather likes you. She's just busy right now." Dawnstorm watched as Softkit sighed in relief.

"Good!" Daisykit squeaked. "If she didn't like us, Thrushkit couldn't be her apprentice!"

"Yeah!" Thrushkit sat down near his sisters. "I really really wanna be Shadefeather's apprentice."

"Well why don't you go tell Brindlestorm about that?" Dawnstorm suggested, trying to get the kits away from the medicine den.

"Will you tell us when Shadefeather's done being busy?" Softkit asked hopefully. Dawnstorm's tail tip twitched.

Despite how annoying and persistent these kits were, it was sweet knowing they looked out for their Clanmates and wanted to talk.

"Of course, now go, back to the nursery." Dawnstorm promised. She

watched in relief as the kits scurried across the clearing back to the nursery.

As Brindlestorm flashed a friendly glance at her kits, the four cats padded into the far end of the nursery together.

Happy to have alonetime again, Dawnstorm's paws guided her out of camp. She hardly realized Chirpfeather had followed her out of camp.

A twig broke behind her and Dawnstorm whipped around, instinctively sliding her claws out. The forest was silent, except for the birds chirping.

Chirpfeather slid out of the bushes in front of Dawnstorm, his head ducked low and his tial bushed. "Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you," he told her sadly.

"I just wasn't prepared." Dawnstorm defended herself. She didn't want to see defenseless infront of her former apprentice.

"I see." Chirpfeather didn't look like he believed Dawnstorm. "I heard you talking to Shadefeather." He admitted sheepishly.

"What did you hear?" Dawnstorm asked, her eyes wide and her fur brushed with concern.

Chirpfeather hesitated before he started speaking. "Why didn't you tell me you were part of a prophecy?"

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Chapter 8

Dawnstorm looked up at the Cloudrock. Ravenstar recited the same apprentice ceremony he always used, but looked a little sad and less energetic than normal.

"Thrushkit, please step forwards." As the kit took a step towards Ravenstar, he dipped down to touch noses with the kit.

"You have reached the age of six moons, and Shadefeather has been wanting to mentor you. Are you willing to train under her until you are a medicine cat?"

Thrushkit nodded eagerly. "Of course!" He squealed. Ravenstar nodded. "You will be named Thrushpaw from this day forwards, until you earn your medicine cat name."

Thrushpaw bounded away to speak privately with Shadefeather, and his sister Daisykit took a tiny bounce forwards as Ravenstar called her name.

"Daisykit, you have reached the age of six moons and are old enough to be mentored as an apprentice. For this day forwards you will be known as Daisypaw. Your mentor will be Stoneswipe." Ravenstar mewed.

The newly-made apprentice dove to meet her mentor, touching noses briefly with Stoneswipe.

"Softkit, please step forwards." Ravenstar called, looking down at the remaining kit.

Softkit was a bit more hesitant than her siblings, but went towards the Cloudrock nonetheless.

"Softkit, you are six moons and of-age to become an apprentice. You will be named Softpaw. I hope Dawnstorm teaches you all she knows from her mentor while teaching you."

Dawnstorm was surprised to hear her name, but dipped her head at Ravenstar as the new apprentice bounded towards her.

Is Ravenstar really giving me an apprentice so soon after Chirpfeather?

She ducked and touched noses with Softpaw before looking back at Ravenstar.

"Clan dismissed!" He called, leaping past the rocks to his den.

Softpaw's little fluffy paws kneaded the ground eagerly.

"So?" Softpaw began. "What's first? Can we train with Daisypaw?"

Dawnstorm nearly let out a purr. "Of course we can take Daisypaw with us. Let's go talk to her and Stoneswipe."

Softpaw squealed and ran towards her sister, who nuzzled her cheek. Dawnstorm walked more slowly, but reached the three other cats within minutes.

"Stoneswipe, is it alright if we patrol with Daisypaw and you? Around the territory?" Dawnstorm asked. She wished that she could sound a little more... mentor-y. Stern and commanding.

Stoneswipe only gazed fondly at Dawnstorm. "Of course. We should go now, before it gets late."

"C'mon, Softpaw, Daisypaw." Dawnstorm nodded to Stoneswipe and started to make her way out of camp, looking back every once and a while to make sure they were following her.

"Softpaw, stay close to me. Don't stray any farther than where I tell you to go." Dawnstorm told her apprentice.

Softpaw nodded, looking determined. Daisypaw and Stoneswipe talked behind them.

Dawnstorm walked along the moor. "This is all tall grass. We have to hunt here mostly. There's tons of rabbits and shrews, but some mice."

"Brindlestorm told me that warriors hunted eagles!" Daisypaw told Stoneswipe from beside Dawnstorm.

Stoneswipe let out a little happy purr. "We can, but we rarely do. When we catch an eagle and kill it, we always feast. Have you ever seen all of us crowded around an eagle in the clearing before?"

Daisypaw nodded. "Brindlestorm let me have a bite of eagle once! It's good!"

"It's a delicacy." Stoneswipe told Daisypaw as they made their way into the forest.

"This is the forest." Dawnstorm explained to Softpaw, who hadn't said a word.

"Really? I thought SageClan had all the forests!" Softpaw gasped.

"We have a little bit of it. It's great for hunting birds like magpie and sparrows." Dawnstorm explained. "You'll learn how to hunt later, though."

Dawnstorm exchanged a glance with Stoneswipe as they made their way south, towards the mountain border.

"This is the border. We don't ever go past the mountains, unless we need to. The Mooncave is slightly north-east of here, but it's not on any Clan's territory." Stoneswipe meowed.

"It's a lot of walking, but up north is our border with TreeClan and the Gathering Tree. Hear me when I say this, don't go onto any Clan's territory unless they tell you it's alright or you need to." Stoneswipe told the apprentices sternly.

Softpaw and Daisypaw both nodded. "Can we go back now? My paws are sore!" Softpaw complained.

Dawnstorm let out a *mrrow* of laughter. "Of course, let's go."

Stoneswipe waited. "Me and Daisypaw are going to make our way up to the TreeClan border," the senior warrior explained. "Meet you back at camp!"

"Alright!" Dawnstorm picked up the pace, making sure Softpaw was following her as she sped past tall grass and moorland.

She halted, Softpaw at her side, when they finally reached the CloudClan camp.

The two walked in, and Dawnstorm brushed her tail over Softpaw's back. "Go have something to eat, and you can go find your new nest." She instructed.

"Okay!" Softpaw squealed and ran to the fresh-kill pile, where she grabbed a tiny mouse.

"Dawnstorm, hello." Shadefeather walked up to her, dipping her head. "Do you think you could go deliver this moss to Bluewing? She's been complaining that her nest is thorny."

Shadefeather held out a bundle of moss. Dawnstorm accepted, nodding at the medicine cat. "I'll do that now."

"Thank you, Dawnstorm." Shadefeather ducked backwards and headed back to the medicine den.

Dawnstorm grappled the moss until it was secure in her jaws, making her way across the clearing to the nursery.

"Bluewing?" She called as she entered.

The pregnant queen sat in a dried moss bed, Shadebriar at her side. Her eyes lit up as she saw the moss.

"Thank you, thank you!" Bluewing sighed in relief as Dawnstorm put the new moss into the nest.

"You're welcome." Dawnstorm dipped her head. "I'll be going now-"

Bluewing let out a small whimper of pain as Dawnstorm turned to leave. The brown and white she-cat turned her head with a scared hiss.

"Bluewing?" Shadebriar asked, his tail brushing her flank. Bluewing's eyes were wild with pain and she flailed in her nest.

"Go fetch Shadefeather!" Dawnstorm ordered as Shadebriar ducked out of the den and raced across camp.

Dawnstorm slinked to Bluewing's side. "You'll be okay, as soon as you're done kitting, the pain will be a memory." She soothed.

Bluewing twisted and turned, opening her jaws in a never-ending wail.

Shadebriar returned with Shadefeather behind him. Dawnstorm took a step back to give the medicine cat and the kitting queen space.

Shadebriar bounded to Dawnstorm's side, not taking his eyes off of Bluewing. Dawnstorm felt her brother's tail curl around hers, and his tail was bushed in fear.

"It'll be okay, this happens to every queen." Shadefeather told Bluewing, her gaze determined.

"But not everyone else." Shadefeather turned to nod at Shadebriar and Dawnstorm. "Out!"

Dawnstorm obeyed, leading the persistant Shadebriar out of the nursery.

"Let's go get a bite to eat." She told Shadebriar. Maybe that would help him calm down.

Shadebriar nodded and they made their way to the fresh-kill pile.

As Dawnstorm shared a rabbit with her littermate, Bluewing's cries were the only thing they could hear.

Chapter 9

Dawnstorm looked up at the Cloudrock.

"Pebblekit, get back here, for StarClan's sake!" Shadebriar's nervous chatter faded as he chased his kit down the clearing. His other two kits, a she-kit and a tom named Runningkit and Greenkit, both giggled and ran after their father.

"You've got your paws full there, no doubt!" Twigclaw called from his spot outside of the elders den, where he sunned on a rock.

"Mhm!" Shadebriar mumbled politely to the elder as he picked up Pebblekit by the scruff.

"Who wants a badger ride?" Bluewing strutted forwards towards her litter, and Shadebriar sighed a breath of relief.

"Thanks, Bluewing." Shadebriar yawned as he set down the little brown and white tom. "I need the break."

"No problem," Bluewing responded, dropping her head to the floor as all three kits clammered on top of her back. "I need the excersize."

A small groan sounded from beside Dawnstorm. Softpaw padded up, carrying a bundle of moss. She spat it out.

"Do I have to do the elders bedding?" She asked quietly. "I really wanna train."

Dawnstorm felt sympathy for her. "You have to do it, yes, but I'm sure Rainbranch won't mind having another cat on the Evening Patrol."

Softpaw's eyes lit up. "Okay!" She whispered in a happy voice, grabbing the moss and bounding away.

Having an apprentice is tough work, but I'm sure she'll be a great

warrior.

Shadebriar approached, wheezing. Dawnstorm noticed he was limping a bit on his back paw.

"Are you okay?" She asked, glancing at the wound. "Maybe you should go see Shadefeather about that?"

"It's fine," Shadebriar insisted. "Want to share prey?"

Doubtful, Dawnstorm watched as he purred and limped towards the prey pile. "I should tell Shadefeather he's got a limp." She muttered to herself.

Chirpfeather yawned as he exited the warrior's den. "Dawn patrol did me rough-" he murmured as he sat beside Dawnstorm.

"Patrolling that early does that to any cat," Dawnstorm purred. "You'll get used to it."

Ravenstar's yowl sounded just as Shadebriar returned from the fresh-kill pile, carrying a sparrow in his paws and a mouse hooked on his claw by the tail.

"Cats of CloudClan! The Gathering is tonight! We must prepare! All warriors, apprentices and elders will attend." Ravenstar instructed. Dawnstorm had forgotten tonight was the full moon.

"Do you think they'll like me? I'm still quite new to the Clans." Chirpfeather's voice nearly scared Dawnstorm.

"Of course they will!" Dawnstorm purred.

"Good." Chirpfeather sighed. "The other Clans are...nice still, Right?"

Shadebriar responded quicker than Dawnstorm could. "Yeah. Most of them are."

As Dawnstorm settled to eat, Chirpfeather and Shadebriar at her side, she wondered. *I hope Softpaw likes her first Gathering.*

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"Follow me!" Ravenstar called from the top of the line. Softpaw's tail twitched from beside her mentor.

Dawnstorm looked down to see her wary apprentice. "It's alright. The other Clans are nice. You don't have to talk to anyone you don't want to."

Softpaw looked the slightest bit less anxious as the group began to walk.

Tall grass brushed Dawnstorm's ankles as they filed into the hollow. CloudClan CTAs dispersed, mingling with the other Clans.

Softpaw stayed firm at Dawnstorm's side.

"Want me to introduce you to some apprentices?" Dawnstorm suggested. Softpaw looked up and nodded.

"Look, there's SageClan. Those two, are apprentices." She pointed her tail at the cats names Beepaw and Fogpaw.

"Let's go say Hi." Dawnstorm trotted forwards, watching as Softpaw followed.

"Hello, Beepaw. Fogpaw." Dawnstorm dipped her head politely. "I have an apprentice, named Softpaw. She's a bit nervous, it's her first Gathering. Mind making her feel welcome?"

Fogpaw have Dawnstorm a warm smile. "Of course. Softpaw, hi!" She waved a paw at Softpaw.

Softpaw's gaze lit up and she started to converse. "I'll be over there," Dawnstorm murmured before turning away.

Before she could move closer to her brother, a sound echoed over the clearing.

"Cats of all Clans!" Cricketstar yowled.

"The Gathering has commenced!" Lakestar rumbled.

Dawnstorm sat quickly, as silence grew over the waiting cats.

"Ravenstar, you may speak first." Lakestar suggested. The brown and black tom nodded his thanks and cleared his throat.

"CloudClan is well. We have new apprentices! Softpaw, Daisypaw and Thrushpaw. Our newest warrior is Chirpfeather. So far, our Clan has not experienced anything new."

Lakestar nodded and muttered something to Cricketstar. The she-cat stood.

"TreeClan is well too. We have had no births or deaths, and all is neutral here."

Lakestar stood before Icestar could.

"BayClan is thriving! We have had queens expecting kits and new litters often! Though, my patrol did scent and ward off a fox."

Icestar gave the other leaders an icy stare. Dawnstorm's fur fell on edge.

"SageClan has been going well. We have plenty of prey and are thriving on everything we could have ever needed."

Ravenstar cleared his throat. "If that's all, I will end this Gathering."

Lakestar, Cricketstar and Icestar muttered agreements.

"Therefore, this Gathering is ended!" Icestar called.

Dawnstorm got up and went straight to Softpaw. "Come on, it's time to go home."

Softpaw let out a sigh. "I liked talking to them-" she complained.

"But they are SageClan. We don't associate with them on a daily basis." Dawnstorm reminded firmly.

Moonlight shone on her pelt, making it glow. Shadebriar caught up with her quickly.

"Have you seen Rainbranch? I just went back to check if she was

still at the Gathering, and she isn't here or there-" Shadebriar whispered carefully.

"No, I haven't." Dawnstorm shook her head, nodding at Softpaw to go ahead and find her littermates in the crowd.

"She's gone, then. Unless she stayed back or something and I didn't notice." Shadebriar sighed.

"Hm." Dawnstorm huffed.

"Has any cat seen Rainbranch?" Ravenstar's voice called.

"No," some cats responded. "Not today, no." Others said.

Dawnstorm's fur felt cold when Brokensky spoke, and she swore she saw a hint of blood on his muzzle. "Where could she be?"

Chapter 10

Dawnstorm sniffed the ground. Still no scent of Rainbranch. The deputy had been missing for days and it seemed that every cat was devastated.

Dawnstorm had been put on a new lookout patrol. They were meant for when a cat dissapeared, to look out for them.

Crowcall grunted. "It's no use." She spat. "We'll never find her in this weather."

Dawnstorm had to admit she was right. The clouds overlapped each other and rain dripped from trees. The grass was muddy and wet, leaving Dawnstorm's paws caked with grime.

Stoneswipe sighed from Dawnstorm's other side. "We don't know that, Crowcall." She hissed.

Chirpfeather's ears swiveled backwards as he scanned the tall grass. "What's over there?" He wondered aloud, bounding forwards with his tail high.

Dawnstorm squinted to see a bundle of something in the grass ahead. It looked about as big as a large rabbit from where she stood, but It could have been bigger.

An ear-piercing shriek echoed the area from Chirpfeather.

"Rainbranch! It's Rainbranch!" He screeched.

Crowcall dashed ahead, while Dawnstorm followed.

As she approached, the scent of death made Dawnstorm gag. Rainbranch's broken body lay, with blood pooled around her and dried blood near her throat and mouth.

Dawnstorm hadn't seen anything more bloody in her life.

"What happened to her?" Stoneswipe whispered. Chirpfeather was already sniffing the area with a determined look.

"No fox scent. Or badger either. Smells like some sort of cat." Chirpfeather's voice reported as Dawnstorm stared at Rainbranch.

She had never been that close with the deputy, but still knew her as a Clanmate. It was heartbreaking, seeing her like this.

Neck snapped, ears and nose bleeding. Dried blood stained the grass around her pale silver tabby fur.

"Who could do this?" Crowcall hissed as Stoneswipe was crouched beside the body, weeping.

Dawnstorm remembered that this cat, Rainbranch, had been Beeflight's sister, and Stoneswipe's aunt.

It must have been difficult, to lose a mother and an aunt in a short amount of time. Ravenstar would be even more shocked, she guessed.

"What happened?" A new voice bounded closer. It was Shadebriar, with his patrol. Silverclaw, Brokensky, and Greenflower flanked him warily.

"Rainbranch," Chirpfeather croaked. "She's dead. Killed by something."

Shadebriar gasped in shock. Silverclaw bounded forwards to comfort Stoneswipe, and Greenflower went to console Crowcall who was staring at the body.

"What happened?" Shadebriar demanded. Dawnstorm looked up to see Brokensky with a blank expression at the far end of the body, staring with his amber eyes.

"It must have been a fox." He shrugged, reaching a paw to scratch vigorously behind his ear.

"It couldn't have been." Chirpfeather argued. "A fox would have eaten her, wouldn't have just killed her for fun."

Brokensky just flashed his Clanmate a glare. Dawnstorm couldn't help but agree with Chirpfeather. A fox wouldn't have come all this way to kill a cat for fun, unless it really, really wanted to.

"Also, no fox scent." Silverclaw reported.

Greenflower still lingered beside Crowcall. "We'd ought to tell Ravenstar. He'll figure out what happened."

Stoneswipe, who stood on shaky paws beside her aunt's still body, sniffed and grabbed Rainbranch by the scruff.

Crowcall darted forwards to help. "Dawnstorm, run on ahead and tell Ravenstar the news. We'll be there soon."

Dawnstorm nodded, her mouth dry. Her paws lead her forwards slowly, but picked up the pace as she kept running.

Ducking into camp, she noticed the content cats curled in their dens, waiting for the rainy weather to stop.

"Ravenstar! Ravenstar!" Dawnstorm screeched, almost unaware of how loud she was being.

Bumblemist's fur went on end as he approached Dawnstorm.

"What happened? Did you find Rainbranch?"

"Yes! No- yes? She's dead!" Dawnstorm struggled for an answer.

Shocked gasps and hisses came from the cats now surrounding Dawnstorm.

"Here, here! She's here!" Dawnstorm hinted with her tail as Crowcall and the rest of the patrol passed her with Rainbranch in tow.

"Rainbranch-" Bumblemist choked on his own voice, staring wide-eyed at the body. He was also her brother, and Beeflight's brother as well.

"I'm sorry," Stoneswipe approached slowly to the tom. Ashface winced as he left the warrior's den and went to comfort his mate.

Ravenstar seemed to hear the commotion and left his den. His gaze fell straight to Rainbranch.

"What happened?" He demanded to Crowcall, who began to explain in a hushed tone.

Dawnstorm didn't have the energy to do much else, but sleeping sounded like a good idea. Maybe if she slept, it could help her calm down.

With her tail dragging on the ground, before the vigil, she turned to Shadebriar. "Wake me when Rainbranch's vigil starts. I'd like to be there."

Her brother nodded solemly and Dawnstorm began to walk towards her den.

Both deputies have died in the last couple moons. This isn't a coincidence, this is cold-blooded murder.

Chapter 11

The she-cat waited by the edge of the clearing as cats gathered. Shadebriar had woke her up soon after she fell asleep for the naming of the new deputy. The light blue moon was shining bright over all of them, and stars shimmered in the sky above.

"Cats of CloudClan! Rainbranch has died at unknown creature's paws. Despite grieving, CloudClan needs a new deputy." Ravenstar began solemly.

Dawnstorm considered who the new deputy could be. There were so many cats who seemed so dedicated to CloudClan already, but because of the bad luck with deputies, she doubted any cat wanted to do it.

"Greenflower," Ravenstar cleared his throat, his fur brushing up. "Will you to the honors of being CloudClan's new deputy?"

Eyes turned to Dawnstorm's mother. She hesitated, holding her breath. Dawnstorm nearly felt sick thinking that the same that happened to Beeflight and Rainbranch might happen to Greenflower.

"No."

The response was followed by gasps of shock. Dawnstorm kept quiet, biting her tongue before she yelled something out.

"Why not?" Bumblemist asked, genuine concern and confusion in his voice.

"I do not believe I am fit to be CloudClan's deputy." Greenflower dropped her head. "There are much more fierce, more loyal cats."

"In that case...Ashface." Ravenstar began to speak again. "Would you like to become my deputy?"

Ashface's eyes glimmered. "Of course, Ravenstar. I don't give up the

best promotion a warrior could ask for on the spot." He glared at Greenflower.

Dawnstorm actually wanted to go scratch his muzzle and teach Ashface a lesson. But he was a Clanmate. That wasn't the right thing to do.

As the Clan departed for sleep, Dawnstorm knew what she had to do.

Dawnstorm racked her brain all night, staying guard in place of every cat who tried to tell her to sleep.

Who could this killer be? It can't be a Clanmate, right?

"Dawnstorm?" A familiar, quiet voice sounded from behind her. The she-cat whipped around to see Chirpfeather, standing with his tail twitching anxiously.

"About this whole...um, staying up late thing. Can I do it too?" He asked hopefully.

Dawnstorm hesitated. "Sure. I'm just thinking about something."

"About what?" Chirpfeather bounded forwards to sit next to her. "What's your thoughts?"

"About Rainbranch. She was such a nice deputy.."

Chirpfeather dipped his head gravely. "One of the best. It was a real shame she passed, and in such a gruesome manner..."

Dawnstorm didn't respond. "It's just...I think a cat did that. Murder her, I mean."

"From another Clan? Or maybe a rouge?" Chirpfeather inquired. "Surely it couldn't-" he paused.

Paws kneading the ground, Dawnstorm gave Chirpfeather an angsty look. "I believe it was a Clanmate. Someone within CloudClan."

Chirpfeather recoiled. "It can't be! We would have seen them!"

"Not if they did it in secret. And Rainbranch can't tell us, right?" Dawnstorm argued back. Chirpfeather had to realize that.

The tabby tom took a breath. "I want to believe you, Dawnstorm. I do. But this sounds like nonsense."

With those words, he padded away.

Dawnstorm was alone with the chirping crickets of the night, and the occassional breeze that passed by and ruffled her fur.

She had given up. No one would believe her stupid theories. "This is useless," she hissed, padding back into the clearing. Stoneswipe blinked awake as she entered the warrior den.

Nodding, the gray warrior went outside to guard. Dawnstorm needed some rest.

And there, in the mossy and feather-filled nest, Dawnstorm curled up beside her fellow warriors and began to sleep.

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A startling sound awoke her. But this was not the warrior's den, it was a starry forest.

Is this StarClan?

Dawnstorm ventured further, trying to stay calm. A cat could jump out at her any moment now.

"Hello?"

"Hi!" A voice responded. She looked to the bushes and noticed a frail cat beside them, it's fur starry and matted.

She knew that cat by heart.

"Beeflight!" She cried out. "Ravenstar would love to see you!"

"Trust me, it would break his heart." Beeflight crouched low, her head and ears drooping.

Dawnstorm didn't respond. "He's doing well. A little...different. But well."

Beeflight nodded with a hopeful glimmer in her eyes. "Are you sure? He's well?"

"That I know of." Dawnstorm purred.

Beeflight seemed like she wanted to ask more and more questions, but stopped herself. "That's not why you're here."

"Why am I here?" Dawnstorm looked around at the forest. The trees were a purplish shade of blue and the dewdrops on the grass were star shaped.

Beeflight cleared her throat. "Dawn's break will stop the sky. Four will become three and the Clans in the forest shall fall."

Dawnstorm frowned. Shadefeaher had already told her that. "I heard that before. From Shadefeather."

Beeflight's eyes went wide. "Oh, mousetails!" She cursed. "Sorry, sorry. I think I was meant to tell you that it *is* a Clanmate." Dawnstorm's heart nearly stopped. "Really? I knew it! Who is it?"

"I cannot say. But if it helps, they also set the fire."

Before Dawnstorm could respond, the world faded into a distant memory.

"Dawnstorm?" A voice whispered in a hushed tone. "You were kicking in your sleep again."

Dawnstorm opened her eyes and saw Stoneswipe by her side.

"Yeah." Crowcall grumbled. "It's waking some of us up, when we have the dawn patrol."

"Don't mind Crowcall, she's a bit grumpy." Stoneswipe flicked her tail over a leaf and pushed a feather on her nest down with a paw.

"Of course I am." Crowcall hissed, putting her tail over her head.

"Sorry again for kicking," Dawnstorm spoke quietly, settling into her nest. "I'll try not to do it again."

"That's quite alright," Stoneswipe nodded. "Goodnight."

Dawnstorm blinked in compassion as she watched Stoneswipe curl around herself in her feathery nest, her chest rising and falling slowly.

Beeflight's words...they couldn't be true. What Clanmate would set their Clanmates on fire?

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Discontinued book!!

I had a fun time writing but it isn't getting many reads so I don't see a point in continuing this.

Goodbye!